

Congressman Rob Wittman (VA-1) issued the following statement today following [remarks by Defense Secretary Leon Panetta on Sunday](#) stating support to maintain the current level of aircraft carriers required by law:

“No American-built weapons system in our arsenal is more important than the United States aircraft carrier. It represents 90,000 tons of diplomacy and 4 and a half acres of sovereign American territory available anywhere it’s needed to protect our country. Our carriers are always on watch at sea. Whether in times of peace or in times of war, they are on station and ready to answer the call, whether it is an enemy threat or a humanitarian disaster.

“I am pleased Secretary Panetta recognizes the importance of our carriers to a successful comprehensive defense strategy, as our nation’s defense faces an unnerving threat from unprecedented cuts looming under the “sequestration” trigger. Sequestration, a mechanism created within legislation last year to force action by the “Super Committee,” will cause irreparable harm to our nation’s defense forces unless we continue to fight. It is undeniable this nation faces tightening budgets and we must work to reduce our deficit. I continue to support a defense budget supported by strategy first, and a responsible federal budget that prioritizes needs over wants. Carriers are the backbone of our all-volunteer Naval force and we cannot discount the crucial role they will play in maintaining the safety of America and executing national security strategy for the twenty-first century.”

**Note:** Wittman wrote an opinion-editorial in December 2011 about the importance of aircraft carriers for the nation’s security and the importance of maintaining an American industrial base. Read his piece [here](#) .

*Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He serves on the House Armed Services Committee where he is the Chairman of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee. He also serves as Co-Chairman of the Congressional Shipbuilding Caucus.*

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